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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of using 75 aides in special education classrooms in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was evaluated in terms of impact on students, classrooms, and staff. Interviews, record reviews, and survey research were used to collect data. Findings revealed that aides were perceived as having a positive impact on the children through more individualized instruction, as well as emotional and academic support. Program and teacher impact included greater planning and preparation time and emotional support for teachers. In addition, administrators and teachers felt that the aides increased program effectiveness and positively affected staff morale and interaction. There was a need for clarification of aides' roles with mainstreamed students. Staff voiced a need for inservice on better using the aides, improving communication between teachers and aides, and helping the aides work with students with various types of handicaps. (CL)

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1985-86 EVALUATION REPORT



P.L. 94-142 C-Level Aide Program

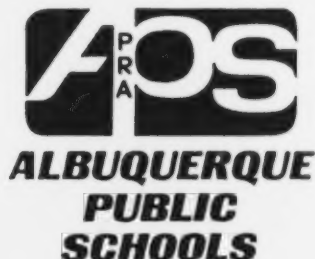
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August 1986

EVALUATION REPORT
P.L. 94-142
C-LEVEL AIDE PROGRAM

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EVALUATION REPORT

P.L. 94-142 C-LEVEL AIDE PROGRAM

ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

Program Description

Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) elected to use some of its Public Law 94-142, Education for All Handicapped Children Act-Part B (P.L. 94-142) monies to provide 75 full time equivalent (FTE) aides in C-level classrooms in the 1985-86 school year. C-level classes are for those special education students who require a minimum of three hours a day special instruction in a limited class size. The Special Education Department chose to allocate P.L. 94-142 monies to this project to fulfill two major goals. The goals were: 1) to provide more adult assistance to C-level students in order to provide more individualized instruction; and 2) to provide these optional aides to classes that do not normally get such assistance.

Study Methodology

The study was designed to evaluate the impact of the program in terms of: impact on students; impact on C-level classrooms and staff; how the aides were used in C-level classes; and how aides were utilized when not in C-level classes. It also looked at the overall effectiveness of the program. Data for this study were collected by three methods: interviews, review of records, and survey research.

Findings

The C-level aide program was a well-received program. More specifically:

- 1) Aides were perceived as having a positive impact on children. Numerous comments indicated that the single most important activity C-level aides performed was that the presence of aides allowed students to receive more individualized instructional assistance from an adult. Providing another role model (in addition to the teacher) as well as giving emotional and academic support to students also were cited as important activities that aides performed which had positive impact on C-level students.
- 2) Aides impacted the C-level program and teachers by:
 - a) Allowing the teachers time to plan additional programs for students;
 - b) Helping teachers by preparing materials for students;
 - c) Helping to monitor student behavior; and
 - d) Providing teachers some emotional support for the stresses of their job.

- 3) Additional impacts on program and staff were also determined. These included:
 - a) Administrators and teachers felt that the additional staff in the C-level program made the program more effective for both students and teachers.
 - b) Administrators and teachers felt the program had a positive effect on staff morale and interaction.
- 4) Respondents indicated a need for clarification on the appropriate use of C-level aides in two areas:
 - a) Duties of aides when not in C-level classes.
 - b) How aides can assist C-level students who are mainstreamed.
- 5) The opinions regarding overall effectiveness and impact of the C-level program were overwhelmingly positive. Respondents almost unanimously expressed the desire that the program be continued, with many encouraging expansion of the project.
- 6) There was a desire by teachers, aides and administrators for intensive inservice on:
 - a) How to better utilize C-level aides;
 - b) How to improve communication between aides and teachers; and
 - c) How aides can better work with children with various types of handicapping conditions.
- 7) Other suggestions made by respondents included:
 - a) Try to provide full-time C-level aides for a teacher or at least do not split an aide among three or more teachers.
 - b) Assign aides to their schools as early in the school year as possible.
 - c) Review the criteria to place full-time aides.

EVALUATION REPORT

P. L. 94-142 C-LEVEL AIDE PROGRAM

Background And Program Description

There were 499 full time equivalent (FTE) special education aides in the Albuquerque Public Schools (APS) as of February 20, 1986. Of these, 75 FTE C-level aides were funded by monies from Public Law 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act-Part B (P.L. 94-142). The Special Education Department chose to allocate P.L. 94-142 monies to this project to achieve two major goals. The goals were to: 1) to provide more adult assistance to C-level students in order to provide more individualized instruction; and 2) to provide these optional aides to classes that do not normally get such assistance.

Section B.1.3.4e of the Educational Standards for New Mexico Schools (July, 1985) describes C-level students as having special needs. The Regulation states:

The [C-level] child's special learning needs are such that the content, methods, and pacing of the regular classroom are inappropriate and must be modified. Assistance with adaptive techniques may be necessary before the child can function in a regular classroom setting. (p. B-4)

The Standards (July 1985) also specify that enrollment in C-level classes "is not to exceed 15 students (B.1.3.4.e)." An aide is required when at least one student is not independently mobile" (B.1.3.4.e.). Hence, APS' C-level aides are indeed optional. Further, Standards specifically restrict the length of the students' instructional day in special education where it states in B.1.3.4.e1:

The special education teacher works with a group of children who are served not less than on a half-to full-day basis and who are integrated into the regular program to the greatest extent possible. (p. B-5)

The Special Education Department recognized the special needs of C-level students when it cited its objective for the program as being "to provide additional assistance to C-level students in order to enhance learning opportunities" (p. 30, 1985 Carryover Plan, Objective 2; and, p. 38, 1986 Plan, Objective 3). The Special Education Department selected activities to meet this objective. The major activities are summarized below:

1. Develop guidelines for use of C-Level aides in conjunction with C-level teacher representatives.
2. Provide inservice to assure appropriate use of personnel.
3. Place aides in C-level classes according to District formula.
4. Evaluate data in terms of need, cost and impact on students (p. 30, Objective 2, APS 1985 Carryover Plan; Objective 3, 1986 Plan, p. 38).

The evaluator from Planning, Research and Accountability (PRA) was assigned to study the impact and effectiveness of the program. Beginning in January, 1986, the evaluator interviewed key special education administrators to determine: a) the goals of the program; (b) the rationale for the program; and, (c) additional questions that the administrators might want to have answered. This was followed by the development of the survey instruments to determine what teachers and administrators think about the program. The surveys were conducted in March, 1986.

How The Program Evolved

The C-Level Aide Program evolved from a recommendation from the local Chapter of the American Federation of Teachers' Special Education Committee. A task force, in conjunction with the APS Special Education Department, had been grappling with the special needs of C-level teachers and students for more than two years. The P.L. 94-142 Advisory Committee supported the concept by recommending that the District provide C-level aides.

Special education administrators cited several reasons impacting the decision to fund the C-Level Aide Program. The reasons included:

1. Teachers, program coordinators, principals and other administrators perceived a need to provide quality individualized instruction for students in classes with different handicapping conditions. Previously, classes contained one type of handicapping condition.
2. According to several Central Office Special Education administrators, C-level teachers have been leaving C-level (and sometimes special education) in large numbers. "Teacher flight" was viewed as having a negative impact on children and program.
3. Teachers, diagnosticians and program coordinators felt that C-level students were not making adequate progress during the course of the year.
4. Larger communities in New Mexico (e.g., Albuquerque, Farmington, Las Cruces and Santa Fe) have articulated a need at the state level to provide aides from supplemental funding.

According to Central Office Special Education administrators, APS' C-level Aide Program was designed to help meet some of the identified needs of C-level teachers and students.

The Special Education Department was charged with establishing criteria for selecting classes in which C-level aides were placed. Based on the fact that there were 222.5 C-level classes and only 75 FTE aide allocations, a distribution system was devised.

A committee of special education administrators made the final determination of the allocation system. It was decided that the guidelines would be 2 aides per high school; 1-2 aides per middle school; and .5 per elementary school with C-level programs. The Special Education Department administrators reserved a certain amount of discretion to place aides at "high need" schools as deemed appropriate by the Special Education Department.

The program allocations for the C-Level Aide Program were assigned through the Human Resources Department. The principals were given responsibility and authority for the individual hiring. If a principal did not use an allocation, then the allocation was reassigned to another school.

EVALUATION DESIGN

Development Of The Study

In January of 1986, a group of Central Office Special Education administrators met with administrators from Planning, Research and Accountability (PRA) to prioritize the 35 P. L. 94-142 components for study. The C-level Aide Program was one of the seven components selected by the Special Education Department for immediate study.

Meetings were held with key administrators, C-level teachers and aides to obtain background information for the study. These pre-survey interviews were conducted to obtain the criteria for distribution of aides, to gather background information, and to ascertain APS staffs' perceptions of the program. At the same time, those interviewed were asked what questions they would like to have addressed by the survey. These questions, and others, were incorporated into the questionnaires.

The research questions evolved from the pre-survey interviews and review of the literature, and ultimately became a topic outline for this report. The questions were:

1. How were aides used in C-level classrooms?
2. How were the aides used when not in the classrooms?
3. What impact did the program have on children?
4. What impact did it have on the C-level teachers and program?
5. Should the program continue?
6. What could be done to make the program stronger?

Due to the breadth of the questions, it was decided to collect data through interviews, review of records, and survey research since no single method was thought to be adequate in and of itself. Each of these methods is briefly described.

Interviews: Individual interviews with special education administrators, principals, head teachers, teachers (both regular and special education), and aides were conducted prior to administering the survey. The pre-survey interviews were used, in part, to obtain background information on how the aides were allocated and what questions about the program the various individuals would like answered. Questions included: How many teachers did an aide help? How were the aides used? Was the program effective? What were C-level teachers' perceptions of the program? Did the program increase the job satisfaction level of C-level teachers? What was the program's impact on students? What can be done to make the program stronger? All these questions were incorporated in the questionnaires.

In some instances, interviews were conducted after the survey to clarify issues raised in the course of the study.

Review Of Records: Records in the special education files, memos and other documents were reviewed to see notes from how the program evolved and how it was utilized. The evaluator also reviewed the records in the Federal Programs Office and Special Education Office to determine how many C-level aides were used and by whom. In addition, several C-level teachers shared their records to help document student growth.

Survey Research: Principals, assistant principals, head teachers, special education program coordinators, C-level teachers and C-level aides were surveyed to ascertain perceived impact and effectiveness of the program. Comments were solicited regarding the benefits of the program and how the program could be made stronger.

Information gained from all available data sources has been integrated throughout the following discussion. The end result is a balanced picture of the effectiveness and impact of the program.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Background

According to APS records, the P.L. 94-142 C-Level Aide Program began in February 1985 with 24 FTE C-level aides. According to several APS special education administrators, the program was so well-received that it was expanded to 75 FTE C-level aides in the 1985-86 school year.

In order to get a better understanding of the perceptions of staff members, all 94 of the P. L. 94-142 C-level aides, 195 C-level teachers, and 198 administrators and head teachers were sent surveys about the C-Level Aide Program. Table 1 summarizes the number of surveys distributed and returned.

TABLE 1			
COMPARISON OF NUMBER OF SURVEYS DISTRIBUTED AND RETURNED			
	# Sent Out	# Usable Returns	Represents % of Sample
Administrators and Head Teachers	198	105	65
C-level Aides	94	74	79
Teachers	195	127	65

It must be pointed out that each of the three groups: administrators and head teachers, C-level aides, and C-level teachers were sent separate but parallel instruments. Of the 198 administrators and head teachers sent surveys, 105 or 65% responded with usable instruments. Of the 94 C-level aides funded by P.L. 94-142 monies, 74 or 79% responded with usable questionnaires. Of the 195 C-level teachers sent questionnaires, 127 or 65% returned usable instruments.

How Many Teachers Were First Year C-Level Teachers?

During pre-survey interviews, several key special education administrators indicated that there was a large turn-over of C-level teachers. These administrators indicated that the C-level aide program was, in part, an effort to slow teacher flight from C-level programs. Every administrator in pre-survey interviews wanted to know, "How many teachers are first year C-level teachers?" The administrators felt that this would enable them to gain an understanding of the prevalence of teacher turnover. Figure 1 on page 9 summarizes the results.

FIGURE 1
BREAKDOWN OF YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

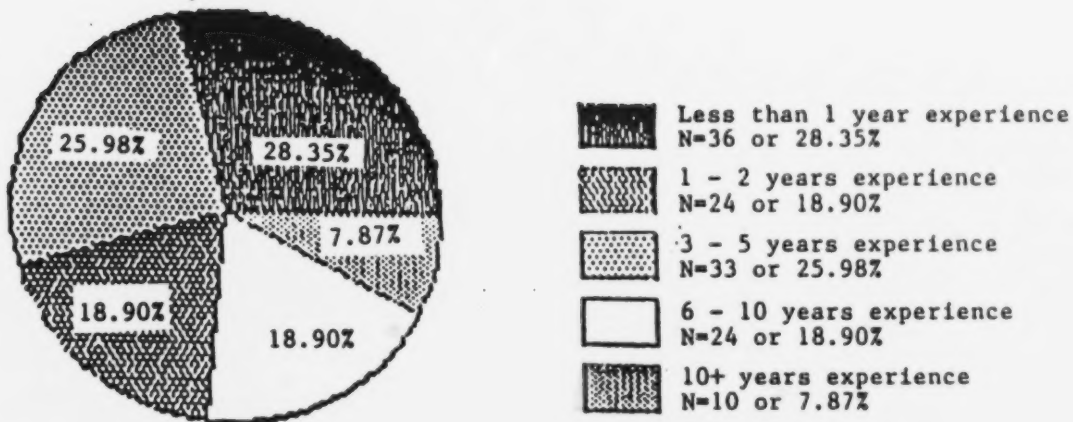


Figure 1 indicates that 36 or 28.35% of the respondents were first year C-level teachers. Twenty-four or 18.9% had 1-2 years experience in C-level. Thirty-three or 25.98% of the respondents had 3-5 years experience and 24 or 18.90% had 6-10 years experience. Ten or 7.87% had 10 or more years experience. Obviously, it is too early to draw conclusions regarding the impact of the C-Level Aide Program on preventing teacher flight--one of the objectives of the C-Level Aide Program. These baseline data will be used for future comparisons.

The same administrators wanted to know if the C-Level Aide Program increased the satisfaction level of teachers and encouraged them to stay in C-level longer. This question, and others, were incorporated into the survey. Results will be discussed later in the report (see page 12).

How Were The Aides Used In C-Level Classes?

Administrators, teachers and aides were all asked to identify and prioritize the two most important things C-level aides do in C-level classes. First, an overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that the most important activity was that "aides provide more individualized instruction." Those making this or a similar comment included: 67 or 64% of administrators; 86 or 68% of the teachers; and 70 or 95% of the aides.

The second most important activity agreed upon by all three groups surveyed is that "aides assist in preparation and organization of materials for students." Those making this or a similar comment included: 32 or 30% of the administrators; 36 or 28% of the teachers; and 32 or 43% of the aides.

Many of the responses on the survey and in interviews revealed that aides are perceived as having significant impact in the classroom. The activities cited also indicate that C-level aides are an integral part of the program. The impact of the program and examples of impact are discussed next.

What Was The Impact Of The Program?

One of the major goals of the study was to look at the impact of the program. The impact of the program was studied in terms of four areas: impact on students; impact on staff; impact on mainstreaming efforts; and overall effectiveness of the program. Each of these areas will be discussed separately.

Impact On Students. Every administrator and C-level teacher in pre-survey interviews wanted to know if the program had a positive impact on children. The answer was a resounding "yes." The survey results amply substantiated this finding. For instance:

- 98.6% of the aides agreed or strongly agreed that by having a C-level aide, teachers had more time to respond to the needs of students.
- 90.8% of the teachers felt that by having an aide they can respond to individual students more effectively.
- 88.5% of the teachers responding felt that the instructional program was more effective as a result of having an aide.
- 87.1% of administrators agreed or strongly agreed that teachers were better able to provide more "success" situations during instructional time.
- 70.9% of the teachers noted that they now had time to listen to students' concerns.
- 70.5% of the teachers felt that students made better academic gains as a result of the C-Level Aide Program.

Of those responding to the survey, 120 of 127 teachers (94.4%) and 101 of 105 administrators and head teachers (96.1%) wrote comments emphasizing the positive impact C-level aides had on students. The responses are categorized and summarized in the section that follows. The number of people making similar comments is noted in parentheses at the end of each comment.

- Students received more individualized instruction from the teacher as a result of the program. (101 teachers; 44 administrators)
- Students made more academic, emotional and social growth because of the aide program. (98 teachers; 67 administrators)
- Students benefitted by having an adult available to prepare or modify instructional materials as appropriate. (61 teachers; 44 administrators)
- Students received quicker feedback by getting classwork graded faster with the aide program. (40 teachers; 27 administrators)
- Students benefitted from more small group work. (37 teachers; 41 administrators)

While many comments were revealing, the impact of C-level aides on students perhaps is best summarized by Kaplan (1982) when he said:

Aides are valuable because, among other things, they offer more personal individualized attention to children who need it, often desperately, and because they enable teachers to aim their specialized knowledge more effectively. (p.86)

While most comments were quite positive, 21 administrators and 44 teachers raised a concern. Sharing an aide among three or more programs was seen as a constraint of the program. One principal summed up the consensus of opinion with the following statement: "I'm not sure sharing one aide among three or four or even five programs is a good model."

When one puts this concern into terms of the number of hours a week a C-level teacher has an aide, one can understand the respondents' concern. One must keep in mind that few teachers have a C-level aide 30 hours a week or more. Most elementary schools with C-level programs were allocated .5 aide, middle schools were allocated 1.0-2.0 aides, and high schools 2.0 aides. Statistics from the survey reveal:

- 10 teachers (7.9%) had an aide 30 hours a week or more
- 59 teachers (46.5%) had an aide 15 hours a week
- 26 teachers (20.5%) had an aide 10 hours a week
- 32 teachers (25.2%) had an aide less than 10 hours a week

Respondents helped to put the statistics into the proper perspective. C-level students are required by New Mexico State Regulation B.1.3.4.e1 to be in a special class one half to a full day (see page 3). The students' learning needs are such that program, pace and materials must be modified significantly for children to learn. Further, students require individualized instruction and immediate adult feedback. Considering that the program was so well-received, perhaps exploring another model of providing aides based on specific student needs is warranted.

Impact On Staff. A question asked repeatedly by special education and regular education administrators was: will having C-level aides encourage teachers to stay in the C-level program? A corollary was, will the aide program increase teachers' job satisfaction?

As measured by the survey, the answer to both questions was strongly positive. Of the 105 administrators responding to the survey, 53 or 53% strongly agreed that teacher job satisfaction increased as a result of having C-level aides; 30 or 30% agreed; 14 or 14% were not sure; and 3 or 2.9% did not respond to the item.

When asked "How has having an aide affected how long you plan to stay a C-level teacher?," 56 or 46.3% of the teachers responding indicated having an aide greatly motivated them to stay in C-level. Twenty-six or 21.5% said it motivated them to stay in C-level longer; 37 or 30.6% said that their plans stayed about the same.

When asked, "As a result of having an aide, has your job satisfaction level changed?," 47 or 38.5% said it increased a great deal; 51 or 41.8% said it improved; 18 or 14.8% said it stayed about the same; 6 or 4.9% said it decreased.

It is clear from the results of the study that having C-level aides has significantly motivated C-level teachers to stay in the C-level program longer. Further, 80.2% of the teachers responding to the survey indicated that their job satisfaction level improved or increased a great deal.

Impact On Mainstreaming Efforts. Apparently there were some mixed interpretations as to whether or not C-level aides should be used for integrating (mainstreaming) special education students into regular classes. While 61% of the administrators, 50.7% of aides and 44.4% of all teachers felt that aides "should" be allowed to assist students in regular classes, differences of opinion emerged as to "how" aides should assist students.

For instance, 55 or 44.4% of the special education teachers strongly agreed or agreed that aides should be allowed to help C-level students in regular classes. Yet another 31 or 25% of the teachers said it was "ok" for aides to tutor students in regular education classwork in the special education classroom but that it was inappropriate for aides to go into regular education classrooms.

Although 61% of the administrators and head teachers responding thought aides should be allowed to help C-level students in regular classes, 75 or 75% felt that aides should assist a regular education teacher only when that teacher has eight or more C-level students in the class at one time.

The salient point is that while all groups recognize the potential of C-level aides, school-based administrators and teachers appear to want to put some limits on the use of C-level aides in regular education programs. This may warrant further study.

On a more positive note, 75 or 75% of the administrators responding felt that as a result of having classroom aides, C-level teachers interacted more with regular education teachers regarding specific children and strategies for mainstreamed students. Both teachers and administrators noted that this has had the end result of improving staff morale.

Further, 24 or 24% of administrators surveyed strongly agreed and 38 or 38% agreed that as a result of the program, C-level teachers have become more involved with helping regular education teachers with transition problems of children going from C-level to regular education.

What Was The Overall Effectiveness of the Program?

Perceptions of the overall effectiveness of the program were obtained by items on the surveys and in interviews. Results of the survey indicated that 90.8% of the teachers believed that as a result of having aides, they can respond to individual students more effectively. Further, 88.5% of the teachers felt that their entire instructional program was more effective as a result of C-level aides.

Unsolicited Individual Educational Plans (IEP's) presented to the evaluator while interviewing C-level teachers further substantiated the 82.9% of the teachers' perceptions that teachers had more time to plan and implement individualized programs for children as a result of the aide program. Teachers felt that, as a result of the C-Level Aide Program, they had more time to spend with individual students, evaluate students' progress in accordance with the child's IEP, and make adjustments to the student's IEP as necessary. Many of the teachers interviewed indicated that they had more time to talk to the students and analyze the individual programs because of the aide program. They felt that the end result was a better program for children. Further, interviews and comments substantiated the perceptions of the 70.5% of the teachers who felt that students made better academic and social gains in classes with an aide than in classes without an aide.

Administrators and head teachers also had positive perceptions of the program. Of the 105 administrators and head teachers responding to the survey, 93.1% felt that the C-level instructional program was more effective with C-level aides than without them. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the administrators felt that students made better gains academically in classes with C-level aides. Those responding to the administrator/head teacher survey were asked additional questions about social and academic gains. In terms of social gains, 46.9% of the administrators felt that students in classes with aides made better social gains than students not in classes with C-level aides. Principals reported that far fewer referrals to the office for discipline gave evidence of better student self-control and more adult monitoring of student behavior. Only one administrator "disagreed" that the program made a difference in this area.

Based on survey results and interviews, one can conclude that the program was perceived to be effective for students and staff. Special Education Department administrators, however, wanted to address three more questions. These were: 1) How were aides used when not in the C-level classroom?; 2) Should the program continue?; and 3) How can we make the program stronger? The sections that follow summarize the responses to these questions. Each of these topics will be discussed separately.

How Were The Aides
Used When Not In
C-Level Classes?

All respondents were asked to list the duties that aides were expected to perform when not in C-level classrooms. Table 3 summarizes the comments.

TABLE 3
AIDES' DUTIES WHEN NOT IN
C-LEVEL PROGRAMS

Descriptions	Number of Responses		
	Aides	Teachers	Administrators
1. Aides have daily duties such as bus duty; lunch; ground duty; recess every day (in addition to the duty roster).	37	58	21
2. Aides occasionally cover classes so that teachers can meet with parents, go to meetings, etc.	13	21	20
3. Aides occasionally assist by taking inventory, escorting visitors, typing or helping in the office.	7	21	15
4. Special Duties which occur occasionally-- (e.g., escorting students on field trips; popping popcorn on Fridays; assisting the department chairperson weekly; monitoring CTBS testing; helping the nurse; helping in the office; and doing "special requests" from the office).	22	20	10
5. Aides have no extra duties other than the duty roster like everyone else.	10	14	19

By and large, the tasks assigned to aides appear to be fairly standard district wide (e.g. bus duty, cafeteria duty). However, there is a tendency for some administrators to assign C-level aides to nonclassroom duties over and above those assigned to aides in other programs. Also, there appears to be some confusion over appropriate uses of C-level aides when not in C-level classes. Several respondents expressed the feeling that C-level aides should be used as intended in the APS State Application for P.L. 94-142 funds (e.g., to provide more individualized instruction) rather than in nonclassroom duties.

Should The Program Continue?

Ninety-two point six percent (92.6%) of the teachers, 97.3% of the aides, and 96.0% of the administrators indicated that they felt this program should continue to receive funds from P.L. 94-142. Several indicated student growth (academic, social and emotional) as the major reason why they feel the program should continue.

Several teachers voluntarily documented student gain by Individualized Educational Plan (IEP's) and test records in follow-up interviews.

What Could Be Done To Make The Program Stronger?

All those surveyed were asked to list (and explain) any suggestions they might have to make the program stronger. Everyone responding couched their suggestions in terms of special needs of C-level students. Suggestions that were cited by 13 or more respondents are summarized in Table 4, page 16. These suggestions included: 1) provide full-time aides in classes with behavior or communication disordered students; 2) do not share aides among three or more teachers; 3) provide inservices for aides; 4) continue the program; and 5) make aide assignments early in the year.

Other suggestions made by 12 respondents or less were: 1) including teachers in the hiring of aides; 2) allowing aides to work in regular education classes; and 3) building in teacher-aide planning time.

TABLE 4
SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS TO
MAKE THE PROGRAM STRONGER

Description	Number of Responses		
	Aides	Teacher	Administrator
1) Please try to give us more full-time aides especially in classes with students with behavior disorders or severe communication disorders. To accomplish this, we may need to revise the criteria used to place aides.	24	47	53
2) Do not share aides among three or more teachers.	27	18	27
3) Provide inservices for aides on: how to work with special children and how to communicate better with teachers. Conduct these before school begins or early in the year.	26	26	19
4) Please continue the program. It would be difficult to run the program without the aides.	21	20	19
5) Please make the aide assignment (and hire them) as soon as possible. Many were not placed until November.	13	14	16

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The C-Level Aide Program began in February, 1985 with 24 full-time equivalent (FTE) C-level aides. The program was expanded to 75 FTE C-level aides in the 1985-86 school year. At the time of the evaluation, the program had been in operation for slightly more than a year.

The study was designed to evaluate: 1) how C-level aides were used in the classroom; 2) the impact of the program on students and staff; 3) the overall effectiveness of the program; and 4) how aides were used when not in C-level classes. Data collection took three forms: interviews, review of records, and surveys.

The major findings of the study were:

- 1) Aides were used in a variety of ways in C-level classes. An overwhelming majority of respondents indicated that aides' most important activity was to provide more individualized instruction to students. The activity perceived to be the second most important was that aides helped teachers prepare and organize materials for students.
- 2) The program was perceived as having a very positive impact on C-level students. More than 90% of teachers and aides and 87% of administrators felt that teachers had more time to respond to the needs of the students. Further, 88.5% of the teachers and 93.1% of the administrators felt that the C-level instructional program was more effective as a result of having an aide.
- 3) The impact on staff was also viewed as being positive. The majority of respondents indicated that the C-level aide program has increased C-level teachers' job satisfaction level significantly enough that 67.8% of the teachers responding said they would probably stay in C-level longer as a result of having an aide.
- 4) Specific ways in which aides helped teachers and the program included:
 - a) Allowing the teacher time to plan additional programs for students;
 - b) Helping teachers by preparing materials for students;
 - c) Helping monitor student behavior;
 - d) Providing teachers relief and emotional support;
 - e) Improving effectiveness of the program for both students and teachers by providing additional staff; and
 - f) Improving staff morale and teacher interaction.

- 5) There was some apparent confusion in appropriate use of C-level aides and whether or not aides should be allowed to help mainstream C-level students by working in regular education classes. Administrators and teachers requested inservice and/or clarification on this issue.
- 6) The overall effectiveness of the program was seen to be overwhelmingly positive. For instance, 88.5% of the teachers felt that the entire instructional program was more effective as a result of having C-level aides.
- 7) Respondents almost unanimously want the program to continue at the same level (75 FTE) or be expanded.
- 8) There were several suggestions from respondents in response to the request to "list any suggestions you have on how to make the program stronger." These included:
 - (a) Provide full-time C-level aides or at least do not assign an aide among three or more teachers.
 - (b) Provide inservice on:
 - (1) Helping aides better understand the special needs of special education students;
 - (2) Helping teachers and aides improve communication skills; and
 - (3) Clarifying appropriate uses and tasks for C-level aides.
 - (c) Assign aides to their schools earlier in the year.
 - (d) Review the criteria to place full-time aides.

Current APS policy insures that staff, including the project leader, will review the data and findings contained in this report. A plan which includes appropriate steps to address identified program needs will be implemented.

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